

1964

THE OSKAR DIETHELM HISTORICAL LIBRARY

FRIENDS OF THE OSKAR DIETHELM HISTORICAL LIBRARY
ANNUAL REPORT
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When Dr. Oskar Diethelm was appointed Professor of Psychiatry at Cornell University Medical College in 1936, he brought with him the conviction that awareness of the historical development of psychiatric thought is an important constituent of one's understanding of the discipline today. Soon after his arrival, he started to collect significant works in the history of psychiatry in order to supply the necessary "laboratory equipment" for research in psychiatric history. This collection gradually grew to such proportions that a separate historical library was created in 1953, and on his retirement in 1962, it was named the Oskar Diethelm Historical Library in his honor. Careful consideration of usefulness for actual historical investigations has always been a major criterion for deciding on acquisitions for the library, and since 1958 it has been the research facility for the section on the history of psychiatry of the Department of Psychiatry.

In order to assist in supporting the library's growth, the Friends of the Oskar Diethelm Historical Library were organized in 1964 with Departmental and University approval. In the first year of the group's existence, membership was restricted to former and present professional staff members. We are pleased to report that 57 individuals became Friends in 1964. With the original restriction lifted this year, we hope that a wider circle will join in this endeavor to add to the library's holdings.

The library consists of a reference section and a collection of original psychiatric and related works that were published before 1920. At the present time the total collection exceeds 4,000 items. In 1964, there were 305 books added. These consisted of 257 monographs, 22 periodicals, and 26 medical theses on psychiatric topics before 1800.

Of these additions, the Friends contributed a total of 90 books.

A representative selection of works donated by the Friends includes:

Binet, Alfred, and Simon, Théodore, **MENTALLY DEFECTIVE CHILDREN**, translated by W. B. Drummond, London: Edward Arnold, [1914].

Binet is known primarily for his work in intelligence and developmental testing. His most important work was begun under the sponsorship of the French Government in 1904 as a project to establish statistical norms for evaluating performance of school children. The writings of Binet and his colleague Simon pioneered in this field of psychology and aroused wide interest in this area of discussion.

Edwards, Jonathan, **A TREATISE CONCERNING RELIGIOUS AFFECTIONS**, Boston: B. Larkin, 1794.

An outgrowth of Edwards' intense personal concern with the validity of mystical and ecstatic experience in religious life, this treatise explores the meaning of emotional elements of moral decision and other "nonrational" aspects of man's thought. Edwards wrote this book from the experience of several years as a pastor during the period of the "Great Awakening," when religious revivalism swept the British and American nations. It is an example of the discussions concerning reason and emotion which preoccupied many 18th century writers with important consequences for psychiatry.

Freud, Sigmund, **SAMMLUNG KLEINER SCHRIFTEN ZUR NEUROSEN-LEHRE AUS DEN JAHREN 1893-1906**, Leipzig: Franz Deuticke, 1911.

This is an early edition of the first collection of Freud's short writings. Among these essays are three which are considered of particular importance in the development of his theory: two essays on "Defense Neuro-Psychoses," and

one on the "Etiology of Hysteria." They represent significant shifts in Freud's concept of the psychological meaning of hysterical phenomena.

Hall, Joseph, THE BALM OF GILEAD; OR COMFORTS FOR THE DISTRESSED, BOTH MORALL AND DIVINE, London: Thomas Newcomb, 1650.

Hall wrote this work from the point of view not of a physician, but of a man of religion. His psychological insights, however, in some respects are advanced beyond those of the ordinary medical writers. For example, on the subject of sleep, he recognized that fear of being unable to sleep in part caused insomnia, and he explored other causes, consequences and treatments of this "complaint incident to distempered bodies, and thoughtfull mindes."

Smith, William, DISSERTATION UPON THE NERVES, London: W. Owen, 1768.

This book is at once typical and atypical of its period. Smith's physiology and general description of the causes of mental disturbance are representative of 18th century "humors and solids" explanations; mental illness is ascribed to the influence of noxious humors in the body which in turn produce a morbid condition of the bodily solids, and finally create irregular circulation of the nervous spirits which are the vehicles of thought and emotion. His attempts to elucidate the nature of these animal spirits are a more curious combination of old and new ideas, at once incorporating many of the new physical and philosophical theories of the day with a strong refrain of essentially medieval scientific views.

Taylor, Jeremy, DUCTOR DUBITANTIUM, OR THE RULE OF CONSCIENCE, London: Flesher, 1660.

This work is a perceptive discussion of what Taylor

(a 17th century theologian) calls the "scruple." With case descriptions he illustrates the development of obsessional phobias and compulsive fears. "The scrupulous man is timorous, and sad, and uneasy, and he knows not why." Taylor sketches particularly vividly the apprehensive paralysis of purpose in the victim whose scruples multiply and are mutually contradictory, particularly in religious persons who fear that their every action, or even inaction itself, is displeasing to God.

The remainder of the books added during the year were purchased by special funds or came as individual gifts. A number of books and theses published before 1750 were acquired through the use of a special fund given by an Anonymous Donor for the use of Dr. Diethelm. Individual donors of relevant works included Mr. and Mrs. Charles H. Blatt, Dr. and Mrs. Eric T. Carlson, Dr. Frank Cormia and Dr. Hans Syz. Outstanding gifts from these sources were:

Burton, Robert, THE ANATOMY OF MELANCHOLY, London: Peter Parker, 1676.

This fine volume is an 8th edition, containing the revisions and additions made by Burton before his death. The Anatomy of Melancholy, which historically has been the most frequently reprinted psychiatric text, was the product of the scholarship of an Oxford Fellow. Burton wrote that he began the work in an attempt to cure a melancholy under which he himself suffered. A massive but absorbing and witty compendium of medical, philosophical and literary opinion on this malady, the Anatomy was enormously popular in the 17th century, but fell from favor during the next hundred years. The Romantic Movement renewed interest in this work, and its prestige again approached that of its first reception.

Anonymous [recopied by William Darrach], NOTES ON

BENJAMIN RUSH'S LECTURES ON THE INSTITUTES AND PRACTICE OF MEDICINE, 4 vols., [Philadelphia, ca. 1818], ms.

Anonymous [possibly Charles Harris], NOTES ON BENJAMIN RUSH'S LECTURES [Theory and Practice of Medicine], 5 vols., [Philadelphia, ca. 1789], ms.

These two sets of student lecture notes are interesting original sources on the thought of this early American psychiatrist, derived from his teaching at the University of Pennsylvania Medical School. Carefully recopied and handed from one college "generation" to the next, such manuscripts provide clues to the developments in theory of the great teachers for which there are no published records. These particular sets are the more valuable, as they apparently represent two different aspects of Rush's life and theoretical work, and illustrate how much Rush included psychology and psychiatry in his general medical lectures.

Among the books bought from Dr. Diethelm's funds there were a number of dissertations of the 17th century, and books containing consultations and observations by prominent physicians of the 16th and 17th centuries. These observations include brief but detailed case descriptions of psychiatric disorders. In our studies we found early descriptions of delirium tremens and catatonia. These books are important because they are the main publications of clinical material before medical journals began to be published at the end of the 18th century.

Indagine, John, ART OF CHIROMANCY, 1563.

The author elaborated the signs of physiognomy and related them to astrology. He exerted considerable influence over a hundred years.

Mercado (Mercatus), Lud., DE MULIERUM AFFECTIONIBUS LIBRI IV, Venet., 1597.

This is the earliest author to describe sexual excitement in women, called nymphomania.

Dionis, M., DISSERTATION SUR LA MORT SUBITE, ET SUR LA CATALEPSIE, Paris, 1718, thesis.

This is the first monograph on catatonia.

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